

Claims.

1. A method for providing presence state information comprising the steps of:

5 receiving first messages from at least one switch in the public switched telephone network (PSTN) containing call event information for at least one telephone line among a plurality of telephone lines served by the one switch;

10 determining a presence state of a PSTN subscriber associated with the at least one telephone line;

15 transmitting a second message using Internet protocol to a first Internet terminal equipment of a first Internet user, the second message containing the presence state information associated with the at least one telephone line.

20 2. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the steps of determining a call state of the at least one telephone line based on the call event information contained within each of the first messages, and storing in memory at least the previous call state associated with the at least one telephone line.

25 3. The method according to claim 2 wherein the step of determining the presence state of the PSTN subscriber comprises comparing a current call state associated with the one telephone line with the stored previous call state associated with the at least one telephone line.

30 4. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the steps of receiving the second message at the first Internet terminal equipment of the first Internet user, determining a visual indicia corresponding to the presence state information contained in the second message, and displaying said visual indicia with a Pal identification label with which the visual indicia is associated.

5. The method according to claim 4 wherein the step of displaying further comprises the step of displaying time information as part of said visual indicia, where the time information is relevant to determining presence of the PSTN subscriber.

6. The method according to claim 5 wherein the step of displaying time information as part of said visual indicia comprises displaying the time of the last presence state change.

5 7. The method according to claim 5 wherein the step of displaying time information as part of said visual indicia comprises displaying the time within which the PSTN subscriber is determined to be available for communications.

10 8. The method according to claim 1 wherein the first messages received from the at least one switch are in a PSTN compatible protocol.

9. The method according to claim 1 wherein said first messages are originated by the at least one switch in the PSTN.

15 10. The method according to claim 1 wherein the step of transmitting the second message comprises transmitting second messages containing the presence state information associated with the at least one telephone line, wherein the presence state information includes time information.

20 11. The method according to claim 10 wherein the time information comprises a time when said call event occurred.

12. The method according to claim 10 wherein the time information comprises a determined time interval following the occurrence of the call event during which the PSTN 25 subscriber is defined to be available for communications.

13. The method according to claim 1 wherein the at least one telephone line is connected to a PSTN terminal that is not capable of direct Internet communications.

14. A method for providing presence state information to an Internet user using an Internet terminal about a public switched telephone network (PSTN) subscriber utilizing a first terminal that does not have direct Internet communications capability, the method comprising the steps of:

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receiving first messages from at least one switch in the PSTN containing call event information for at least a first telephone line coupled to the first terminal;

10 determining a presence state of the PSTN subscriber associated with the first telephone line;

transmitting a second message using Internet protocol to the Internet terminal of the Internet user, the second message containing the presence state information associated with the at least first telephone line.

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15. The method according to claim 14 further comprising the steps of receiving the second message at the first Internet terminal of the Internet user, determining a visual indicia corresponding to the presence state information contained in the second message, and displaying said visual indicia representing the presence state on the Internet terminal with a 20 Pal identification label with which the visual indicia is associated.

16. The method according to claim 15 further comprising the step of displaying time information as part of said visual indicia, where the time information is relevant to determining presence of the PSTN subscriber.

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17. The method according to claim 15 further comprising the step of displaying one of a PSTN telephone number and a name of the party with whom the Pal is having a telephone call.

30 18. The method according to claim 5 further comprising the step of displaying one of a PSTN telephone number and a name of the party with whom the Pal is having a telephone call.